

Sen. Cowles: Supports budget addressing issues raised by constituents

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MADISON – Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after voting in favor of [2023 Senate Bill 70](#) as amended by Senate Substitute Amendment 2, better known as the 2023-2025 State Budget:

“This budget largely addresses the comments and requests I have heard from constituents across Northeast Wisconsin. I knew the benefits would be felt from Ashwaubenon to Wittenberg and everywhere in-between, which is why I was pleased to cast my ‘aye’ vote this evening,” Senator Cowles said. “But at the end of the day, no budget is perfect, and this one is no different. However, I believe we made many positive steps in this bill.”

“With these investments, legislative Republicans have focused on keeping the budget transparent by keeping non-fiscal policy items separate from the budget. This will allow for proper public input and legislative committee vetting on these often-complex issues. We also invested more in government transparency by assisting WisconsinEye, a C-SPAN-like service for our state government, in being freely accessible to Wisconsinites. This ensures citizens across the state can follow the Legislature’s hearings and floor sessions, showing what their representatives are doing in real time.

Senator Cowles continued, “I have always advocated for fiscal responsibility, and this budget is no exception. This includes using one-time cash instead of bonding, which will save around \$500 million or more in interest payments over the next few decades. The state will also pay off \$400 million in Tobacco Settlement Fund bonds early, saving \$30 to \$40 million per year over the next 15 to 20 years. The

taxpayers of Wisconsin will reap the benefits of these savings for many years to come.”

Even with a structural deficit of nearly \$1.5 billion less than the Governor’s proposed budget, some of the new investments which should benefit residents of the 2nd Senate District include:

- \$1.2 billion in new public K-12 resources, including an additional \$975 for every pupil over two years
- \$360 million to provide substantial raises to correctional officers, assistant district attorneys, and public defenders, making wages more competitive to improve recruitment and retention in public safety
- \$195 million to support staffing and resident care in nursing homes and assisted living centers
- \$125 million in a trust fund to address PFAS contamination in waters across the state
- \$4.4 billion in property and income tax cuts for hardworking Wisconsinites
- \$10 million in increased funding for youth apprenticeship and career and technical education programs, getting our high school students into high-demand, well-paying careers after graduation
- \$5 million to improve care and services in veterans homes, and a 25% increase in county and tribal veteran service officer funding to help connect more veterans to the benefits they have earned
- A \$32 million investment in the Department of Tourism to attract visitors to our state for weekend getaways and other new events
- \$40 million in State Park System operations, routine maintenance, and capital improvement projects
- Millions in new or continued funding for agricultural programming from fields to markets, including funding for two farmer-led conservation programs created by a law authored by Sen. Cowles last session

Senate Bill 70 now heads to the Assembly for their consideration tomorrow. Following Assembly action, the budget then heads to the Governor's desk.